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FARM BUSINESS FACTS

A radio discussion between John Baker, Radio Service, and E. J. "Mike" Rowell, Agricultural Marketing Service, broadcast from Washington, D. C., on the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Thursday, January 25, 1940, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company.

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BAKER:

On Monday we brought you the highlights of some reports on the damage which freezing weather caused to fruit and vegetable crops in the Southern States. These preliminary reports were received by Agricultural Marketing Service just prior to the broadcast. Today we're going to bring you more details on the extent of the freeze damage. And, as usual, our reporter from Agricultural Marketing Service is E. J. "Mike" Rowell.

ROWELL:

The cold wave which hit the southern truck crop areas on January 18 -- that was last Thursday -- has continued, with temperatures on Tuesday as low as 23 to 25 degrees in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Now taking the report by States, we have highlights from Florida, Texas, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Virginia.

BAKER:

You mentioned Florida first.

ROWELL:

Yes, the report which came in yesterday told of rising temperatures and gentle rains, but along last week-end temperatures from 7 to 10 degrees below freezing were reported. And now about the damage. Cabbage in Northern Florida was hit pretty hard, - about 40 percent of the tonnage has been lost. This means that shipments of cabbage will be light and poor quality for at least the next 3 weeks. Cabbage in the Everglades was not damaged, but frost in that area caused a loss of about half of the green peas and somewhere between one-fourth to one-half of the snap beans. As a result, there'll be lighter supplies of these commodities on the market during the next few weeks. The report from Plant City said that about 15 percent of the early transplanted green peppers had been killed. Trough cucumbers in Sumter County, Florida, were badly damaged, but growers will probably do a lot of re-planting. The damage to citrus fruits in Florida was slight. Florida's critical temperatures are expected tonight!

BAKER:

And now what about the damage in Texas?

ROWELL:

Vegetables and citrus fruits were seriously damaged, although the temperature was up to 45° at Brownsville, Texas, this morning. It will be 10 days before the loss of fruit can be determined, and it will be 2 or 3 days before we will know just how much damage was done to the vegetable crops. So we'll report on that later. I'm afraid it is going to be a sad story. The 3-inch fall of snow in the Winter Garden area of Texas may have given some protection to the crops there. But the heavy frost on the morning of January 23, followed by sunshine, did a lot of damage in the lower Rio Grande Valley. It was above freezing there

this morning. In that area many cabbage heads are split and beet tops show the effects of freezing. Carrots didn't seem to be hurt as much. It was cold that ice crystals formed inside of the grapefruit and oranges. Of course, this ruined much of the grapefruit for shipment as fresh fruit. However, it's being canned as rapidly as possible. In this way some of the crop will be saved. Valencia oranges which were just coming into production show less damage than other citrus fruits in Texas. At Corpus Christi it was 32° and 30° at Galveston this morning.

BAKER:

If that covers Texas, now what about Alabama?

ROWELL:

Monday's report told of damage to the cabbage crop. However, reports received yesterday indicate less damage than previously reported. Most of the winter crop in that State was harvested, and there was only about a 20 percent loss on the spring crop plantings.

BAKER:

Now about Louisiana and Mississippi.

ROWELL:

Louisiana has had freezing temperatures every morning since January 19. Beets, carrots, collards, mustard, turnips, and spinach are practically a complete loss. About 1/3 of the old cabbage was damaged. Young cabbage plants in fields were all killed but will be replaced. Shallots were frozen to the ground with about 30 percent loss of tonnage and quality of the remainder poor. Strawberry damage is believed to be negligible. Mississippi cabbage plants in coldframes and tomato plants in hotbeds were not materially injured.

BAKER:

And that leaves just Virginia to report on today.

ROWELL:

The weather has not moderated enough in Virginia for us to find out how much damage was done to the spinach crop, but the loss is believed to be small. The crop is covered with snow, and therefore no shipments will be possible until the weather moderates.

BAKER:

It's bad news that you bring, Mike Rowell -- but it's vital news and we appreciate it. Thanks, Mike, and if you have more news for us on the freeze damage, come down and tell us about it.